
FY15 Q1 Quarterly Report

October - December 2014

“Espoir pour les Communautés de Ouallam, Tillabéri”
ECOUT Program

2014-2015



A beneficiary stands with her goat following a voucher redemption event in Banikane (Dingazi commune)



Stocks of agricultural products for warrantage in Samtigue Village (Ouallam commune)

I. Executive Summary

Since April 2014, Mercy Corps Niger has been implementing an Emergency Food Security Program (EFSP) funded by USAID/Food For Peace entitled ECOUT¹. This program is designed to meet the immediate needs of communities affected by recurrent food crises and to improve local capacity to adapt and build resilience to future stresses and shocks. The program will reach 56,000 of the most vulnerable individuals (8,000 households) in the communes of Ouallam and Dingazi in the Ouallam department.

During this reporting period (October – December 2014), the program completed the following activities:

- In October, a third round of unconditional cash transfers were distributed to 4,941 households (UCT of 32,500 XOF (US\$ 68) each, for a total of 160,528,500 XOF (US\$ 338,782) distributed);
- 4,392 goats (does) and 554 bucks of the species “*chèvres rousses de Maradi*” were distributed through vouchers to 4,392 women. The total value of these goats was 153,326,000 XOF (US\$ 323,473);
- 2,660 beneficiaries (1,220 women and 1,440 men) and 12 field agents were trained on the fundamentals of animal husbandry, animal health, fodder management and nutrition/hygiene practices around milk production;
- 18 new community outreach workers (COWs) representing newly targeted villages were identified and validated by the local health district. In total, 34 female and 46 male COWs (including the 62 previously identified COWs) were trained on the eight essential family and community practices to fight malnutrition;
- A nutrition caravan was organized in partnership with the Imam of Ouallam, which aimed to disseminate messages about healthy eating and nutrition practices for infants and young children as well as pregnant and lactating women, and to address the principal food taboos within the communities. Using religious and scientific arguments, messages sought to convince the population to increase their consumption of goat’s milk. 1,435 women, 1,043 men and 648 children or teenagers attended the caravan meetings;
- 3,455 beneficiaries were identified from 27 villages in Ouallam and Dingazi communes to participate in gardening activities. 3,425 beneficiaries received vegetable seeds and 3,067 received agricultural tool vouchers redeemable for one hoe, one watering can and one rake per beneficiary. The total value of seeds and agricultural tools distributed is 29,704,500 XOF (US\$ 62,668);
- A warrantage system was established in partnership between Mercy Corps and ASUSU S.A, which will enable farmers to access microcredit using agricultural products as collateral. Stocks of 20,402 kg of agricultural products (millet, sorghum, cowpea, peanut and groundnut) were created in five pilot villages;
- 19 community-based early warning systems (CEWS) were established (six in Ouallam and 13 in Dingazi commune) through village assemblies under the chairmanship of the communal authority (either a mayor or his representative);
- Weekly surveys of the five primary markets in Ouallam and Dingazi (Ouallam, Sargane, Dabré, Dingazi and Yadia) were conducted to monitor availability, quality and price of principal consumer products.

The program also undertook regular monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure efficient program implementation and follow-up, including distribution and post-distribution monitoring.

¹ *Espoir pour les Communautés de Ouallam, Tillabéri* in French

II. Program Overview

Large parts of the Nigerien population have been affected by severe food insecurity in the last decade, particularly in 2005, 2008, 2010 and 2012, after a combination of drought and flooding decimated crops and forage. In August of 2013, this pattern repeated itself, impacting the harvest of staple crops. The Ouallam department of Tillabéri region was one of the hardest hit, and with 59 percent of the population moderately food insecure - the highest proportion in the country - the population was immediately vulnerable to food insecurity.

The ECOUT program aims to assist 56,000 beneficiaries (8,000 households) over a period of 18 months to meet their immediate needs and build their resilience to future shocks and stresses. The program will support agro-pastoralists affected by food insecurity within the communes of Ouallam and Dingazi to improve their nutritional status through the purchase of nutritious food during the lean season using food vouchers and unconditional cash transfers. ECOUT will also support the diversification of household diets by increasing access to dairy products. Beneficiaries of the program will receive vouchers for the purchase of a goat, animal feed and vaccinations, and will benefit from training in animal husbandry, animal health and fodder management.

The ECOUT program also aims to increase the resilience of agro-pastoralist communities to future shocks. Specifically, the program will support community-driven projects to rehabilitate pastureland and increase water efficiency through Food for Work (FFW) activities. ECOUT will further contribute to the recovery and increased resilience of farmers in Ouallam department by providing training on climate-smart techniques. Participants who complete the training will earn vouchers to purchase improved agricultural inputs. Lastly, the ECOUT program will contribute to strengthening the GoN's early warning system (EWS) for food insecurity by building the capacity of community-based early warning committees to effectively identify imminent shocks and communicate projected needs to commune-level bodies. Mercy Corps will also work to ensure that nutrition messaging is a part of all program activities.

III. Program Activities

3.1. Program achievements during the reporting period

3.1. Program achievements during the reporting period					
Description of Activities		Achievement			Quantitative and Qualitative Description
		Achieved	Ongoing	No	
Outcome 1: Agro-pastoralist populations affected by food insecurity have reduced nutrient gap					
Activity 1.1.1	8,000 households benefit from food for work activities, receiving food through voucher system	X			One month of food for work (FFW) activities conducted in July 2014, enabled us to rehabilitate 1,107 ha of degraded soils. These FFW activities have been followed by three months of unconditional cash transfers (see below).
Activity 1.1.2.	8,000 households benefit from unconditional cash transfers (UCT)	X			3 rd round of unconditional cash vouchers distributed in October benefitting 4,941 households (three households were absent). The total value of vouchers distributed during the month of October was 160,528,500 XOF (\$338,782). This third round completes the past lean season, with two rounds distributed to 4,944 households in August and September. Mercy Corps plans to undertake additional cash transfers during the 2015 lean

Description of Activities		Achievement			Quantitative and Qualitative Description
		Achieved	Ongoing	No	
					season to reach the 8,000 targeted beneficiaries.
Activity 1.1.3	4,400 households benefit from vouchers to purchase goats (4,400 does, 600 bucks)	X			4,392 households received vouchers for the purchase of goats (does) and 554 bucks were distributed (ratio of one buck for eight does). The total value of goats distributed was 153,326,000 XOF (\$323,473).
Activity 1.1.4	4,400 households benefit from one-month animal feed vouchers and vaccinations for their goats			X	Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) will be signed with local livestock and veterinary service providers during next quarter (January), after which recipients will receive vouchers to access veterinary services. Additionally, feed vouchers will be distributed during the next quarter.
Activity 1.1.5	4,400 households benefit from training in animal husbandry, animal health, fodder management, and nutrition/hygiene around dairy production		X		Training was conducted with field agents and beneficiaries on the basics of animal health, breeding, milk production, equipment and infrastructure and herd management. In total, 2,660 beneficiaries have been trained in 24 villages targeted under the program (1,220 women, 1,440 men) during this quarter. Trainings are still ongoing to reach all of the beneficiaries of goats in all the villages targeted by the program.
Activity 1.1.6	Community-level nutrition messaging and behavior change activities related to ENA (essential nutrition actions) and household dairy consumption		X		80 outreach workers were trained on malnutrition prevention tools and sensitization techniques. Nutrition caravans traveled to targeted villages to disseminate messages about healthy eating and nutrition practices for infants and young children as well as pregnant and lactating women; to identify and help remove food taboos, including early weaning of children; and to inform beneficiaries about the nutritional benefits of consuming goat's milk, using religious and scientific arguments.
Outcome 2: Agro-pastoralist population affected by food insecurity have increased capacity and resources that support resilience					
Activity 2.1.1	Land rehabilitation and small infrastructure projects conducted under food for work activities	X			1,107 ha of land have been rehabilitated through FFW activities (half-moons) in 36 villages. Reforestation was undertaken at one additional site at Sargane Baba Windi in the last quarter with <i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i> (0.5 ha), at the beneficiaries' own initiative. The estimated cost of this reforestation paid by the beneficiaries is 100,000 XOF (US\$ 211)
Activity 2.1.2	8,000 households benefit from agricultural inputs, via voucher system	X			During this quarter, 27 villages (10 in Dingazi and 17 in Ouallam commune) were selected for gardening activities based on the availability of water for irrigation (dam, stream, etc.) and received vouchers redeemable for vegetable seeds and tools. 3,455 potential beneficiaries have been identified in these 27 villages. In total: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3,425 beneficiaries received seeds; - 3,067 beneficiaries received tool vouchers (one hoe, one watering can, one rake) This distribution complements the 4,845 households that benefitted from cowpea and/ or millet seed distributions in previous quarters.
Activity	8,000 households		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 279 beneficiaries (276 men and 3 women) were

Description of Activities		Achievement			Quantitative and Qualitative Description
		Achieved	Ongoing	No	
2.1.3	trained in climate-smart agricultural techniques				trained on soil rehabilitation techniques; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,849 beneficiaries (1,021 men and 828 women) were trained on natural pest control and conservation techniques. Additional training needs have been identified on the following topics and training materials developed: organic manure composting, biological control of crop diseases, etc. These trainings are scheduled to begin during the next quarter.
Activity 2.1.4	30 EWS structures benefit from training and capacity building support		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19 EWS structures (six in Ouallam and 13 in Dingazi) were established and members trained on the roles and responsibilities of an EWS member; Four EWS (two in Ouallam and two in Dingazi) established under a completed program of Oxfam/Karkara will be integrated into ECOUT at the request of the Vulnerability Monitoring Observatories (VMO) of Dingazi and Ouallam.

3.2. Program activities narrative

Activities related to the outcome “Agro-pastoralist population affected by food security have reduced nutrient gap”

Completion of unconditional cash transfer activities

In the previous quarterly report, Mercy Corps reported that three months of unconditional cash transfers (UCT) would be undertaken during the months of August, September and October to complete the one month of FFW, rather than three months of FFW activities and one month of UCT as initially planned. Two rounds of cash distributions were conducted during the previous quarter, and a third month of UCTs was undertaken during the month of October to support households through the lean season, as the cereal harvest was not completed until November within the two targeted communes. In total, 4,941 households received a UCT of 32,500 XOF (US\$68) per month during the three-month lean season. A total of 160,528,500 XOF (US\$ 338,782) was distributed during the month of October, and 481,682,500 XOF (US\$ 1,016,208) was distributed to 4,941 households over the three-month period (August, September and October).

Community level nutrition messaging and behavior change

➤ **Training of community outreach workers**

During this quarter, 80 community outreach workers were trained on the following topics, preparing them to undertake outreach activities within their communities:

- The ECOUT program: objectives, activities, beneficiary selection;
- Procedures for community outreach activities under the ECOUT program;
- Training on malnutrition prevention tools, including: hygiene awareness, cooking demonstrations, food diversification, exclusive breastfeeding, food processing and conservation.

Table 1: Community outreach workers trained by the program during this quarter

Commune	Number of community outreach workers trained		
	Women	Men	Total
Ouallam	18	35	53
Dingazi	16	11	27
Total	34	46	80

➤ ***Nutrition caravan activities undertaken with the Imam of Ouallam to promote behavior change and adoption of good nutrition practices***

In the primarily Muslim communities targeted by the ECOUT program, religious leaders are a powerful source of nutrition and health behavior change information. During this quarter, the program conducted a nutrition caravan in partnership with the Imam of Ouallam, visiting the main villages in Ouallam and Dingazi communes (12 sites in total). The caravan had the following objectives:

- Using both religious and scientific arguments, the caravan sought to convince beneficiaries to adopt the consumption of goat's milk;
- To disseminate messages about healthy eating and nutrition practices for infants and young children as well as pregnant and lactating women;
- To help remove food taboos, including early weaning of breastfed children.

Before the caravan activities were undertaken, two exchange workshops were organized in Ouallam and Dingazi, in partnership with the health district and the Imam of the Grand Mosque in Ouallam, in order to sensitize community leaders about the consumption of goat's milk and nutrition best practices. A total of 108 Imams and villages leaders attended these workshops.

Caravan activities, undertaken at village meetings, reached a total of 1,435 women, 1,043 men and 648 children or teenagers. Discussions focused on the following food taboos, which have a negative impact on health and nutrition outcomes:

- ✓ Prohibiting girls and pregnant women from eating eggs out of the belief that their children will become robbers;
- ✓ Weaning the child from breastfeeding if the mother becomes pregnant again, due to the belief that the milk of a pregnant woman is poison to the suckling child or can kill the embryo;
- ✓ Mothers avoid exclusive breastfeeding out of fear that the child will suffer from dehydration, as the population believes that breast milk causes thirst;
- ✓ Persistent rumors that goat's milk causes allergies;
- ✓ Etc.

(Report continues with pictures on the next page.)



Nutrition caravan day in Dingazi



Imam of Ouallam questioning a beneficiary



Imam of Ouallam speaking to the population



Woman talking about nutritional taboos

Distribution of goats and bucks to vulnerable households

In order to encourage the diversification of household diets and to promote resilience of vulnerable households, the ECOUT program distributed vouchers to vulnerable households redeemable for the purchase of goats locally known as “*chèvres rousses de Maradi*.” In total, 4,946 goats were distributed, including 4,392 does and 554 bucks, to 4,392 women. The following activities were undertaken:

➤ Identification of goat beneficiaries

Surveys were undertaken in 7,782 households in order to collect household-level vulnerability data (including the number of members of the household, number of goats, sheep, cattle, number of children 0-3 years old or 3-5 years old, etc.) Women were selected to benefit from the program based on the following criteria:

- ✓ At least one child under 3 years old present in the household;
- ✓ The household has 0 cattle, 0 sheep, and 0-1 goats;
- ✓ The head of household is a woman.

Following this process, 4,399 women were selected to receive goats.

➤ Capacity-building of field agents

A 3-day workshop was organized to build the technical capacities of ECOUT field agents (12) and of agents from the livestock extension service in Ouallam. The training focused on the basics of animal rearing, milk production, breeding, infrastructure and farming equipment, and herd management. The training sought to achieve the following:

- Ensure that participants have the skills needed to support agro-pastoralists and pastoralists in beneficiary villages;
- Strengthen the capacity of participants to support and provide feedback to local trainers;
- Provide technical terms in the local language (Zarma) to enable the field agents to better convey messages to the beneficiaries.

➤ ***Training of beneficiaries on basics of animal husbandry prior to goat distribution***

Prior to the distribution of the goats, meetings were organized to train beneficiaries on the basics of animal husbandry. A total of 1,220 women and 1,440 men from 24 villages were trained on the criteria for choosing a dairy goat; how to properly feed and care for your goat; and herd management: animal husbandry, animal health, fodder management and nutrition/hygiene practices around milk production. These trainings are ongoing with additional beneficiaries.

➤ ***Quarantining of goats***

A public tender was advertised and vendors were selected to participate in the goat distribution through a voucher system. Each vendor was required to transport the goats to the distribution sites in Ouallam, which is 800 kilometers from Maradi. At each distribution site, the animals were held in quarantine for seven days prior to the distribution, where they were isolated to prevent contact with indigenous animals and observed both technical and health criteria in order to certify the animals before distribution to the beneficiaries. Quarantining was monitored by livestock extension service agents of Ouallam in partnership with MC field staff. At the end of this quarantine period, a certificate of quality and conformity of animals was delivered by the livestock extension service agents of the Ouallam department, authorizing Mercy Corps to receive and distribute the goats to the beneficiaries.

➤ ***Distribution of vouchers to beneficiaries***

Distribution of the goats took place at 13 sites, which were accessible to beneficiaries from the 56 target villages. Each beneficiary received a voucher worth 31,000 XOF (US\$ 65.4) redeemable for the purchase of a goat (doe). In order to ensure continued genetic quality of the goats in the ECOUT program zone, the program also distributed vouchers for bucks (US\$ 65.4 each) with a ratio of one buck to 8 does. The bucks are jointly owned by groups of 8 women beneficiaries from the same village, based on their choice of group members, and the buck is managed in a weekly rotation between the members. This system was designed to reduce the potential for conflict between beneficiaries and to optimize the goats' fertility. Overall, 4,946 goats (does and bucks) were distributed in the two communes of Ouallam and Dingazi (see details in the following table), worth a total value of 153,326,000 XOF (US\$ 323,473).

Table 2: Goats distributed Ouallam and Dingazi through a voucher system

Commune	Number of goats (does)	Number of goats (bucks)
Ouallam	2,076	260
Dingazi	2,316	294
Total	4,392	554



Goats being transported from Maradi to Ouallam



Goats during quarantining at the distribution site



Goat distribution day at Dingazi



A woman with her goat at the distribution site

Activities related to the outcome “Agro-pastoralist populations affected by food insecurity have increased capacity and resources that support resilience”

Promoting vegetable crop production

➤ Identification of villages and beneficiaries for vegetable production activities

Vegetable crop production requires the presence of a water source in the village or nearby. Therefore, the program conducted a survey to identify villages in the target area that had adequate water available and where beneficiaries were already practicing or were interested in practicing vegetable gardening activities. This survey found that 27 out of the 56 villages targeted by the program (17 villages in Ouallam commune and 10 villages in Dingazi commune) have adequate water access for vegetable gardening activities. In total, 3,455 beneficiaries within the 27 villages were identified to participate in gardening activities.

➤ Distribution of vegetable seeds and tools via vouchers

The program aimed to increase agricultural production and diversify livelihoods in Ouallam by providing beneficiaries with training on vegetable gardening and supporting access to improved

agricultural inputs through a voucher system. Program participants received vouchers redeemable for the following inputs:

- Seed kits: each kit contains tomato, onion, bell pepper, carrot, cabbage, lettuce, okra and “*moringa*” seeds (10 grams of each), and has a value of 3,300 XOF (US\$7);
- Agricultural tools: each kit comprises one hoe, one watering can and one rake, worth a total of 6,600 XOF (US\$ 12.7).

Table 3: Quantities and values of seeds and tools distributed

Type of inputs	Number of vouchers distributed	Value of each voucher (XOF)	Total value (XOF)	Total value (US\$)
Seeds	3,425	3,300	11,302,500	23,845
Tools	3,067	6,000	18,402,000	38,823
Total	6,492	9,300	29,704,500	62,668

➤ *Training of trainers and gardening field schools*

In each of the 27 villages, two trainers were identified and trained on improved gardening practices. These trainers will train other members of their communities on improved practices, with the support of Mercy Corps field agents, at gardening field schools located in each village. The program has identified a 0.5 ha site in each village enclosed by a wire fence where trainings will be conducted, and gained permission from the landowner to use the land to benefit the community. The program has taken steps with the various stakeholders (landowners, local authorities, etc.) to secure the site's exploitation by all beneficiaries.



Beneficiaries carry their gardening tools after the voucher redemption



Kit of agricultural tools distributed



Gardening field school site enclosed by a wire fence

Facilitating access to microcredit through warrantage

In order to support farmers to protect their harvests and improve their incomes, Mercy Corps worked with local microfinance institutions to establish a warrantage system. Typically, most farmers (particularly the most vulnerable) must sell their produce immediately after harvest, when everyone else is selling and prices are lowest, because they need money and lack the resources to pay for warehouse space. Under the warrantage system, rather than selling their harvest immediately, farmers can use it as collateral to obtain credit from a microfinance institution (MFI). The beneficiaries store their produce in a locked warehouse with keys held by both the MFI and beneficiary group, and can sell it later in the year when prices are higher.

Out of the 56 target villages, the program identified 5 villages that were motivated to pilot this activity: Goura Goura, Kouffey, Banikane, Korou and Samtigue. ECOUT teams sensitized community members on the warrantage process, preparing produce for warehousing, uses of credit, how to apply for credit, and conducted a market survey. The program undertook negotiations with ASUSU SA², one of the largest microfinance institutions in Niger, for the implementation of the warrantage activities in Ouallam zone, which agreed to grant loans to program beneficiaries at preferential rates. The quantities of agricultural products stocked under the program are presented in the table below. Credits will be distributed to the beneficiaries at the beginning of the next quarter (January 2015).

Table 4: Quantity of agricultural products for warrantage

Type of product	Quantity of stocks (kg)
Millet	15,955
Sorghum	2,225
Cowpea	707.5
Peanut	1,479
Groundnut	35
Total	20,401.5

Implementation of early warning activities in Ouallam department

² See more details on ASUSU SA at : <http://asusu-sa.com/>

➤ **Training members of the Vulnerability Monitoring Observatory (VMO)**

A training course on community-based early warning systems (CEWS) was conducted with 26 individuals including civil society, extension services, traditional leaders, local authorities, associations and NGO representatives. The contents of this training included: CEWS rules and operations, establishment of CEWS, sensitization of community members, choice of CEWS commission members, rules and responsibilities of the communes and VMO, etc. After the training, ECOUT STAFF held meetings with members of each VMO to select new CEWS representatives in each municipality and to develop a roadmap for information and awareness sessions in the new target villages.

➤ **Establishment of community-based early warning system (CEWS)**

During this quarter, the program established 19 CEWS, previously identified in collaboration with the Vulnerability Monitoring Observatory in each commune. The twentieth CEWS that had been previously identified could not be established during the reporting period because there was a risk of conflict between the villages of the cluster (Kouffeyzedo and Logayezedo). Each CEWS is led by a team of 14 people consensually chosen by their communities, based on the criteria of availability, volunteerism, motivation, education, and capacity for analysis and neutrality. The teams elected a president, a reporter and members of the following commissions:

- Food security;
- Nutrition;
- Human and animal health;
- Environment and natural resources management;
- Social relations and conflicts;
- Special events.

In Ouallam commune, all CEWS comprise clusters of villages, while in Dingazi, 7 CEWS were created within distinct villages due to the relative long distances between villages.

Table 5: Community-based early warning systems (CEWS) established in the two communes

Communes	Number of CEWS	Number of villages included	Observations
Ouallam	6	23	All cover clusters of villages
Dingazi	13	33	7 solitary, 6 clusters
Total	19	56	

Weekly market surveys in five principal markets in Ouallam and Dingazi

Five essential markets (Ouallam, Sargane and Dabré in Ouallam commune, Dingazi and Yadia in Dingazi commune) were surveyed on a weekly basis to track the availability (quality and quantity) and prices of the following essential commodities: millet, maize, rice, oil, salt, sheep, goats and chickens. These markets and commodities were selected based on the commodities produced or frequently purchased by the program beneficiaries. The sizes of sheep and goats surveyed were selected to mirror those typically owned by the poor and very poor.

Based on these observations, all of the selected essential commodities were available within all of the surveyed markets over the last quarter. Though prices fluctuate slightly, no alarming trends have been noted. Despite the opening of two new weekly markets in Dingazi commune (Dingazi and Yadia), commodity breaks were not recorded during the last three months. The price of rice and oil remained stable, while the price of millet and cowpea varied over the period, especially in the Dingazi market where the price of cowpea increased in December due to the

high demand for this item at the end of the year. The price of cowpea remains high compared to other commodities. The price of salt has increased over the last three months due to heavy rains in Ghana, which is the main supplier of salt to Niger. Livestock prices remained stable for sheep and goats, as supply and demand remain balanced.

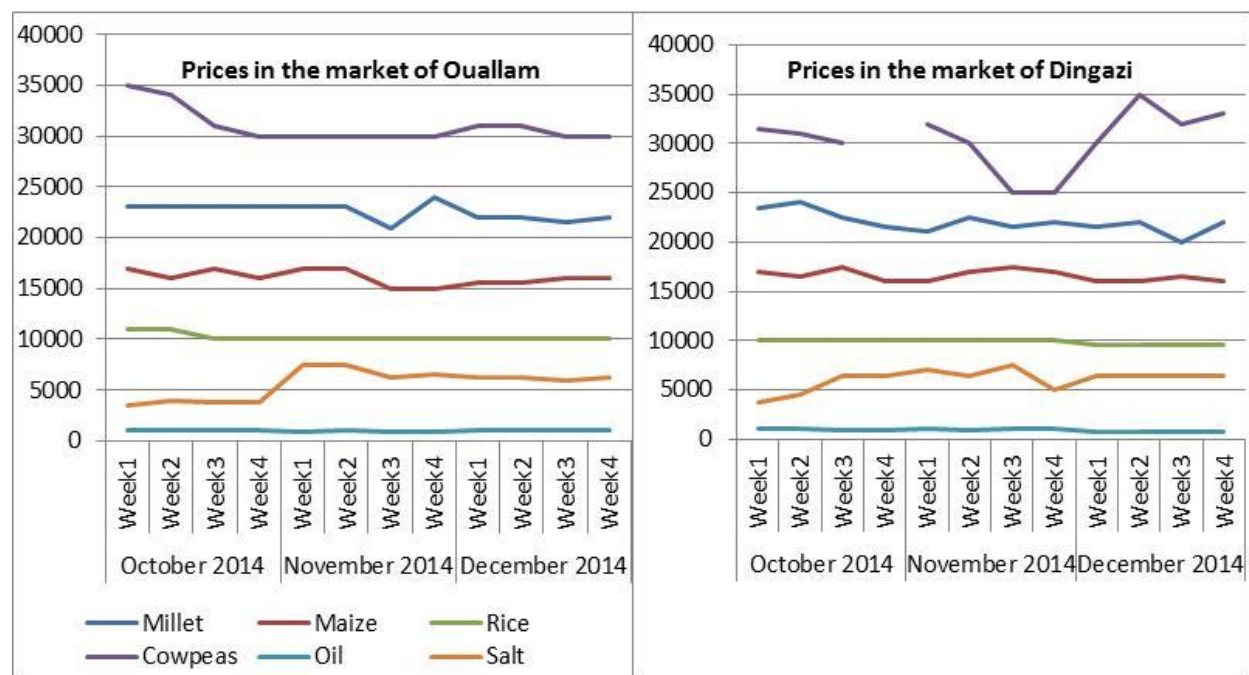


Figure 1: Commodity price trends within primary markets monitored over the past three months

IV. Monitoring & Evaluation

During this quarter, the M&E team conducted several household surveys to support the identification of beneficiaries of goats and agricultural inputs. Surveys were conducted in 100% of beneficiary households to ensure a rigorous and objective selection of beneficiaries for each sub-activity. Each of the 7,999 project beneficiaries received a unique ID number to facilitate monitoring and follow-up. Furthermore, activity monitoring is conducted using mobile phones and ODK to collect data from the field. For each main component of the program (agriculture, livestock, nutrition and early warning system), a dedicated template is uploaded on ODK and used by the field agents for data collection and monitoring.

V. Coordination

Mercy Corps took a leading role in promoting coordination between actors involved in food security interventions in Ouallam District, in order to harmonize interventions, ensure that priority needs are covered, promote synergies and avoid duplication. Coordinating at the national, regional and sub-regional levels, Mercy Corps partnered with the Department of Ouallam to organize a meeting to redefine priority intervention areas after the lean season. During the meeting, Mercy Corps agreed to begin working with 3,055 additional beneficiaries in 20 villages previously covered during the lean season by Catholic Relief Services (CRS), in order to promote their resilience to future shocks. In addition, several meetings were held with authorities from the communes of Simiri and Tondikiwindi to explore the possibility of creating CEWS in these localities.

VI. Challenges

The program has successfully completed emergency activities planned for the lean season, working closely with partners and other stakeholders to implement resilience activities. The primary challenges encountered by the program involved difficulties working with service providers (vendors) during voucher distributions, including non-respect of distribution planning, poor quality of some items provided, inconsistencies with financial reconciliations, etc.

VII. Next steps

With the lean season finished, the program has now begun to focus on activities designed to strengthen the resilience of beneficiaries to future shocks and stresses. Thus, the next quarter will focus on the following activities:

- ✓ Training beneficiaries on the production of multi-nutrient blocks for animal feeding;
- ✓ Training beneficiaries on the technique of treating straw with urea and salt for increased nutrition of animal feed;
- ✓ Organization of joint missions with Mercy Corps, agents of the Ministry of Livestock in Ouallam and a private veterinarian office to monitor the health and productivity of goats distributed;
- ✓ Training beneficiaries on goat milk processing techniques;
- ✓ Distribution of vouchers for animal feed;
- ✓ Implementation of behavior change activities using community empowerment principles;
- ✓ Training of CEWS coordinators;
- ✓ Establishment of new CEWS;
- ✓ Mapping of disaster risks in each CEWS area;
- ✓ Distribution of microcredits and monitoring of their use by the beneficiaries;
- ✓ Promotion of good agricultural practices in vegetable gardening;
- ✓ Training sessions on the eight Essential Nutrition Activities (ENA);
- ✓ Activities to promote the eight ENA & “ANJE” practices during all village ceremonies and ECOUT activities;
- ✓ Training of community outreach workers and health district agents;
- ✓ Evaluation to understand the impact of awareness campaigns on behavior change, including on the consumption of goat’s milk and changes to negative eating habits.